

Oroville could fall to record low storage this year

California's World Class Delta State Fair Exhibit announcement

DWR Aquacasts

Drought conditions continue statewide. June can now be added into the string of dry months. Although June is typically dry in California, it was unusually so, bringing no rain to places like Sacramento, San Francisco, and Bakersfield. The Northern Sierra 8-station group received only 0.01" in June vs. the normal of 1.0". Many northern locales have had little or no rain in June before, yes. But now the 4-month period, March through June is the driest on record for each. Statewide average precip over the last 12 months (mid-July, 2007 to mid-July, 2008) is 76.7% of average. California is seeing its 6th driest April-May-June in 114 years of record: (use the upper right selection tabs)

http://www.wrcc.dri.edu/monitor/cal-mon/frames_version.html

We are in a wait and see mode till October and the start of the next water year and rainy season. Doubtful that much further drop will occur until at least then over California on the Drought Monitor put out by the USDA:

<http://www.drought.unl.edu/dm/monitor.html>

Availability of water is more complex here than in other states: soil moisture and recent precipitation deficits are offset by California's water supply infrastructure.

Reservoir levels are the current topic of interest. Here is a list of some selected reservoirs:

% capacity, % change in capacity since 7/1/08, % avg storage

Reservoir

Folsom Res.	38%	down 10%	50%
Shasta Res.	45%	down 8%	59%
Oroville	38%	down 5%	49%
New Melones	51%	down 2%	83%
Don Pedro	62%	down 4%	81%
San Luis	25%	down 8%	45%

For additional reservoirs, here are monthly readings for 155 reservoirs in the state. This will update to "End of July, 2008" information on August 11th. For now it is valid to June 30, 2008:

<http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/reservoirs/STORAGE>

And a nice graphical depiction, updated every couple weeks:

http://watersupplyconditions.water.ca.gov/current_conditions.pdf

And here is a daily summary that only includes some of the larger reservoirs:

<http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/reports/RES>

If comparing % of average storage, be sure to compare the same list of reservoirs. Some reports include different groups.

There is some good news. Projections for end of the year in-state reservoir storage for September 30, 2008 are 70% of average. Earlier concerns were it could be as low as 65%. With the onset of November rains, reservoirs begin to rebound historically. So, do your rain dance!

Some individual reservoirs have more meager storage than the mean. Oroville, the Feather River reservoir at the top of the State Water Project is forecast to drop to a record low sometime this calendar year.

The all-time record low for Oroville is 882 Thousand Acre Feet (TAF) which was on September 8, 1977. Projections are that it will drop to the mid-700's TAF sometime between October and the end of Calendar Year, 2008. That would be a drop to about 21% of capacity! Since Oroville didn't come close to filling this past winter, mandated water deliveries and Delta water quality releases make it one of the harder hit reservoirs in this drought. It already looked dry a few months ago, at 40% of capacity; take a look at this aerial photo:

<http://www.water.ca.gov/news/newsreleases/2008/060408oroville2008.pdf>

At the time of this photo, Oroville was holding twice the amount of water it is expected to be holding this fall or early winter. The next Oroville storage projection comes out later this week, and changes to this record-low scenario are possible. The Bureau of Reclamation would have to be asked whether federal reservoirs, like Shasta and Folsom will fall to record low storage. They may not. And it all depends on how much rain comes our way.

On Monday, July 21 a Congressional Oversight Hearing on the "Federal Response to the California Drought Emergency" was held in Fresno by the Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Water and Power. Here is a short recap news story:

http://www.dailynews.com/news/ci_9953754

Long-range outlooks (which did not do a great job last winter) are saying the mid-winter period of December, 2008 through February, 2009 will have "normal" precipitation across the west.

http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/long_range

Other long-range models will be forthcoming between now and October, so will be reviewed later. El Nino conditions are now neutral, meaning neither warm El Nino nor cool La Nina ocean temperatures are in place over the equatorial Pacific. Neutral conditions are forecast to continue at least through fall of 2008.

Join DWR at the California State Fair! Our biggest exhibit yet will feature California's World Class Delta. The fair runs from August 15 through September 1, including Mondays this year. We will have interactive exhibits, walk-through habitat, animal and biology shows, and other presentations that relate to the Delta.

New! DWR Aquacasts are short informative audio presentations about the great programs and initiatives in statewide water management. They are available on the web as mp3 files, or in text form. If you have a question for DWR, you can email it in. A future Aquacast may have the answer!

<http://www.water.ca.gov/newsroom/podcast/podcasts.cfm>

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